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AUTHOR Housden, Theresa; Kam, Rose
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ABSTRACT

This document summarizes the research on full-day kindergarten. The question of whether full-day scheduling is good for children is addressed. The majority of the research justifies the following conclusions: (1) A developmentally appropriate program focuses on activities that are appropriate for the child's age and involve interaction with objects, other children, and adults; (2) A developmentally appropriate full-day schedule benefits children academically and socially, especially children from low socioeconomic or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds; (3) Teachers prefer full-day to half-day scheduling; (4) Parents react favorably to the full-day schedule; (5) Start-up costs can be offset by increased state aid for all-day students, reduced transportation costs, and increases in enrollment; and (6) Full-day kindergarten may reduce long-term costs for special and remedial education. A list of eight annotated references is appended. (GLR)

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SAN JUAN UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Research and Evaluation Department

Theresa (Terry) Housden
Rose Kam

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FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN: A SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH

In response to societal changes—parents' working, children's exposure to television, and many children's experience with Head Start, nursery school, or day care—full-day* Kindergarten has increased greatly in the past decade. Educators laud the schedule but express caution. Referring to adoption of a developmentally appropriate approach versus imposing the first-grade curriculum on younger children, Dominic F. Gullo observes, "All-day kindergarten has the potential of being either a blessing or a bane for young children. This will depend on which type of pressures prevail in influencing the development of the all-day kindergarten program" (p. 38).

Overall, is full-day scheduling good for children? Results of studies vary, but the bulk of the research justifies these conclusions:

✓ ***A developmentally appropriate program focuses on activities that are age appropriate and involve interaction with objects, other children, and adults.*** Materials are real, manipulable, and relevant to the child's life experience. For example, a field trip to a grocery store may involve language (drawing up a list of things to buy), math (measuring ingredients bought), and science (discussing what happens when ingredients are mixed).

✓ ***A developmentally appropriate full-day schedule benefits children academically and socially—especially children from low socio-economic or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds***. There is more time for formal and informal learning activities; for enrichment experiences in music, art, and physical education; for individual help; and for social interaction with adults and other children. As compared with half-day kindergartners, full-day children show an overall better self-concept and attitude toward school, achieve higher scores in readiness tests at the end of kindergarten, and earn higher conduct marks and show greater achievement in reading and math on tests administered in the primary and middle grades.

✓ ***Teachers prefer full-day to half-day scheduling.*** It allows them to individualize instruction and devote more time to development of children's academic readiness.

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*The **half-day kindergarten schedule** typically assigns a teacher one group fo children in the morning and another in the afternoon. The **full-day schedule** assigns a teacher the same children from 8 to 9 a.m. to 3 or 4 p.m. (A few districts consciously separate education from care, providing teachers in the morning and qualified child-care aides in the afternoon.)

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- ✓ ***Parents react favorably to the full-day schedule.*** It accommodates the schedules of working parents by eliminating the need for afternoon child care, and parents appreciate their children's more complete preparation for first grade.

- ✓ ***Start-up costs can be offset by increased state aid for all-day students, reduced transportation costs (no noon bus to take kindergarten children home), and potentially greater enrollment.*** A number of communities have discovered that parents who had previously chosen private schools opted for the public school once it offered an all-day kindergarten schedule. Costs for supplies and maintenance need not increase and may even decrease because fewer children use each room and its equipment.

- ✓ ***Full-day kindergarten may reduce long-term costs for special and remedial education.*** Children come to kindergarten with mental ages ranging from three to eight, and developmental lags in language, motor, or perceptual skills are common even among children of average or above-average intelligence. Family stability and physical, emotional, and behavioral factors may affect some children's abilities to learn. Full-day kindergarten teachers have more time to diagnose and help solve such problems before children go on to the first grade.

Selected References

Carmody, Deirdre. "More and More, Kindergarten Means a Full Day." *The New York Times. Education.* 4 October 1989.

Describes for the general reader a developmentally appropriate full-day kindergarten program.

***Effects of Kindergarten Scheduling: A Summary of Research.* Research Brief. Arlington, VA: Educational Research Service, 1989.**

Traces the historical development of the American kindergarten and reviews the findings of nearly 50 studies on the effects of kindergarten scheduling upon student achievement and behavior, attitudes of parents and educators, and program cost.

Gullo, Dominic F. "The Changing Family Context: Implications for the Development of All-Day Kindergartens." *Young Children* (May 1990), 35-39.

Presents the full-day schedule as responding to societal and educational needs, and warns of the dangers of substituting academic pressure for developmentally appropriate programs.

Herman, Barry E. *The Case for the All-Day Kindergarten.* Bloomington, IN: The Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1984.

Reviews full-day pro and con arguments, summarizes recent research, discusses typical emotional and learning problems of kindergarten children, and presents a checklist for establishing a full-day kindergarten.

***A Longitudinal Study of the Consequences of Full-Day Kindergarten: Kindergarten through Grade Eight.* Evansville, IN: Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corporation, 1988.**

Studies the effects of the full-day schedule from 1978 to 1988 in terms of students', parents', and teachers' attitudes about it; standardized test scores (including self-concept, school attitudes, and academic subjects); retention; and report card academic and conduct marks.

Ogens, Eva M. "Consider a Full Day Kindergarten." *School Leader* (March-April 1990), 32-35.

Argues the benefits of the schedule in educational terms and in terms of the inseparable aspect of care—medical, nutritional, psychological.

Olsen, Deborah, and Edward Zigler. "An Assessment of the All-Day Kindergarten Movement." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly 4* (1989), 167-186.

Reviews the literature in a manner critiqued by others as overly negative, but confirms at least short-term increases in academic skills, especially for children "who are disadvantaged, bilingual, or 'least-ready' for school" (p.179).

School Readiness Task Force. *Here They Come: Ready or Not!* California State Department of Education, 1988. Superintendent's Message, Introduction, and 21-page report.

Recommends an appropriate, integrated curriculum for children ages four through six. Includes a discussion of fiscal impact.

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